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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu called Dr. Michael

Oren to inform him that he has officially been appointed Israel's ambassador to the U.S. Leading media reported that yesterday Oren told AIPAC that Israel will not let Iran get nuclear weapons. Israel Radio quoted opposition leader Tzipi Livni as saying that time is not on Israel's side in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Jerusalem Post quoted her as saying at the conference that Netanyahu still has no organized plan to present to the Americans.

Yesterday Maariv speculated that President Shimon Peres will tell President Obama that Netanyahu will not hesitate to operate against Iran. HaQaretz reported that Netanyahu has put together a panel of high-level officials to consider alternatives for action against the Iranian nuclear threat. The team has been meeting a few times a week ahead of Netanyahu's trip to Washington. Team members include DM Ehud Barak, FM Avigdor Lieberman, Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon, Intelligence Minister Dan Meridor, National Security Advisor Uzi Arad, and Mossad Director Meir Dagan. The Jerusalem Post reported that several senior members of Congress asked President Obama on Thursday to set a deadline for engaging with Iran and that he apply strong sanctions if talks do not work.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, while PM Benjamin Netanyahu is refusing to explicitly endorse a two-state solution to resolve the Palestinian conflict, participants at the AIPAC Policy Conference will this week be urging their elected representatives to press President Obama for precisely that.

Yesterday HaQaretz reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu plans to ask the cabinet (before flying to the U.S. in two weeks) to approve a withdrawal from the northern part of the village of Ghajar, which straddles the Golan-Lebanon border. This move is mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War. HaQaretz quoted a senior political source in Jerusalem as saying on Saturday that Netanyahu wants to respond to the American request on the matter. The media also said that the move would be a goodwill gesture to the government of PM Fouad Siniora ahead of upcoming Lebanese elections. All Ghajar residents, in both halves, are Israeli citizens. This move will necessitate security arrangements aimed at preventing terrorists from infiltrating Israel via Ghajar while not making life intolerable for the villagers.

All media reported that yesterday the cabinet decided to cut 14 billion shekels (around \$3.5 billion) in planned expenditures over the next two years. The decision was approved by a vote of 20-10, with all the Labor and Shas ministers opposed. The 10th vote against came from Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar (Likud).

The media reported that a fourth case of swine flu was diagnosed in Israel yesterday. The patient was a 20-year-old woman from Holon who recently returned from Mexico. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that rabbis from Tiberias thanked Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for the decision to stop the raising of pigs in Egypt.

The media reported that the USG has decided to drop charges accusing two former pro-Israel lobbyists Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman of illegally disclosing classified information just weeks before their four-year-old case was set to go to trial.

Maariv reported that Netanyahu has told Attorney General Menachem Mazuz that Ofer Dekel, the PM's former point man on the prisoner issue, will reveal state secrets (in the memoirs he is planning to publish).

Over the weekend the media reported that the IAF bombed five tunnel systems used for smuggling arms and other goods from Egypt into Gaza. At least two Palestinians died in the raids. The Palestinians fired a Qassam rocket at the western Negev on Thursday and launched two more on Saturday. The media reported that an IDF soldier was stabbed in Ramat Gan yesterday in what is suspected to have been a terror attack.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Physicians for Human Rights-Israel plans to tell the UN today that there has been a 1.5% rise in the number of Palestinian patients whom Israel has interrogated and forced to provide information on Hamas or to serve as spies as a precondition to leaving Gaza for medical care.

Media reported that police have arrested nine Bedouin residents of the Israeli Arab town of Shfaram on suspicion of planning to carry out attacks against Israelis.

The Jerusalem Post reported hundreds of Christian supporters of Israel were to gather last night in Washington with a group of international lawmakers seeking to further Israel-U.S. ties based on shared Judeo-Christian values, amid growing concerns of a nuclear Iran.

Maariv cited the Arab Knesset members' anger over a speech that Prof. Sam Solomon, formerly the imam of Khartoum, will deliver at the Knesset today about the dangers of jihadist Islam.

The Jerusalem Post noted that Jack Kemp, the onetime Republican VP candidate who passed away on Saturday, was known for his affection and activism for Israel.

Haaretz reported that Sue Gardner, Wikipedia's leading editor, who attended the Wikipedia Academy 2009 Conference in Israel this week, refuted claims by leading Israeli Internet researchers that Wikipedia's coverage of Israel-related issues is problematic. Gardner said that the Web site merely reflected public discourse. I know that more or less the same mistakes [on Wikipedia] can be found in The New York Times, she was quoted as saying.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe cited a survey conducted by the United Jewish Federation of New York that found that no more than 100,000 Israelis live in the U.S., not half a million as previously thought. The report does not seem to match data published in The Jerusalem Post and based on the same survey.

Leading media reported that 17-year-old Israeli Itamar Hasson won a silver medal at the Asian Physics Olympiad in Thailand.

Haaretz and The Jerusalem Post cited the results of an Anti-Defamation League/ Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University survey conducted by Maagar Mohot among Israeli Jews:

Asked about military action against Iran, 66% said they approved of it, 15% said they were opposed and 19% said they did not know. Among those who said they approved military action, 15% said they would change their minds if the United States opposed it, while 75% said they would not. The rest were undecided.

An overwhelming majority also said they believed close relations with the United States were essential for ensuring Israel's security. Sixty percent of the respondents said they had a "positive" or "very positive" attitude toward President Obama. However, only 38% said they thought his attitude to Israel was friendly -- in contrast to 73% of respondents in a 2007 poll, who defined the attitude of the previous president, George W. Bush, as friendly.

Asked whether reconciliation with the Arab and Muslim world would come at the expense of Israel's interests, 63% said they believed it would; 71%, however, said the interests of the United States and Israel were "similar" or "complemented each other."

1. Iran:

Summary:

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: Q[Israel's] stuttering ambiguity provides no advantage: neither a deterrent against Iran, nor pressure on the rest of the world. The situation needs to be expressed directly and clearly in Washington.

Jonathan Spyer, a senior researcher at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: Q[Iran's] assistance to the Taliban follows the familiar broader pattern of encouragement of instability across the region.

Block Quotes:

I. "Option-Shmoption"

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/3): QIn the clash of wills between two rivals, so far it is Iran's determination to acquire nuclear weapons that is being accepted as fact. By contrast, there is a lack of Israeli determination to act against the unique combination of the intention to eradicate and a willingness to tolerate weapons of mass destruction. The stuttering ambiguity provides no advantage: neither a deterrent against Iran, nor pressure on the rest of the world. The situation needs to be expressed directly and clearly in Washington, to the administration, to Congress, and to the American public. President Shimon Peres cannot foment such a change tomorrow, during his visit with Obama, but then Peres is not in a decision-making position. In fact, maybe Netanyahu isn't either.

II. "Tehran's Stake in Regional Insecurity"

Jonathan Spyer, a senior researcher at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (5/4): Q[Iran's] assistance to the Taliban follows the familiar broader pattern of encouragement of instability across the region. Iran is in the business of challenging the U.S.-dominated order in the Middle East. Preventing an American achievement in Afghanistan, and keeping NATO forces bogged down in an endless, bloody sloggish match in the country represents a natural expression of this.... The U.S. administration thinks that Tehran should support regional security and stability. The problem is that the Iranian regime appears to have a different way of calibrating its interests. In the Iranian approach, support for violence and insurgency brings with it myriad advantages. The Western powers, prevented from attaining their objectives, appear weak and helpless. The enemy, bogged down in conflicts elsewhere, has less time and capital to spend on containing Iranian ambitions. And finally ... proxies can always be abandoned at an opportune moment, in order to buy time for projects of truly central importance.

2. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe era of boycotts on central players in the region, which was typical of the Bush administration, has come to an end. The Americans might discover that in the end one can't plan or expect anything in the Middle East, but until that happens everyone is going to have to get used to the new rules of the game.

Block Quotes:

"The Rules of the Game Have Changed"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (5/3): QThe reports about closer relations between the Obama administration and Syria left the Israeli policy makers thunderstruck.... Israeli officials, so it would seem, are dizzy from trying to keep track of the dramatic changes that have been made to American foreign policy in the Middle East. The intimate relations with the U.S., at least judging by the way things look at present, aren't what they used to be.... It is reasonable to assume that the issue [of withdrawal from the Golan] will be discussed at length in the course of the meeting between Netanyahu and Obama. It is highly unlikely that Netanyahu will suggest to the President of the U.S. that an agreement between Israel and Syria be based on the formula that was proposed by Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman: peace in exchange for peace. The negotiations between Israel and Syria, which in the past decade were conducted with American mediation, clarified to each side what the other side was demanding be paid to it in exchange for a peace treaty. Israel is demanding that Syria stop serving as a supplier

of weapons to Hizbullah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. One thing is certain: The era of boycotts on central players in the region, which was typical of the Bush administration, has come to an end. The Americans might discover that in the end one can't plan or expect anything in the Middle East, but until that happens everyone is going to have to get used to the new rules of the game.

13. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Former Health Minister, former Transportation Minister, and former Deputy Foreign Minister Ephraim Sneh (then from the Labor Party) wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: Q[A] package of understandings would defuse the danger of an Israeli-American clash.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: Q[Ambassador-appointee to Washington Michael] Oren will be at his most effective if Netanyahu can articulate a foreign and security policy that is coherent and sensible.

Block Quotes:

1I. "Understandings before a Clash"

Former Health Minister, former Transportation Minister, and former Deputy Foreign Minister Ephraim Sneh (then from the Labor Party) wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (5/4): QGlimmers of concern have recently crept into conversations with various American officials about a possible clash between the Obama administration and the Netanyahu government.... The agreement that Obama speaks of contains unavoidable components: withdrawal from 96 percent of the West Bank, the transfer of the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem to Palestinian rule, and a special arrangement for the holy places. It is very doubtful whether a majority will be found in the present Knesset to approve such an accord.... And above all, there is the Iranian issue: Addressing it requires coordination and full understanding between Israel and the United States -- not tension and conflict. This entanglement may be unraveled by means of a Qpackage of understandingsQ between Israel and the U.S., which will ensure tangible progress toward the establishment of a Palestinian state, and will serve the shared interests of both America and Israel in the face of an Iran heading toward nuclear power. In the framework of this package, Israel would undertake five pledges: to institute a total, monitored freeze on construction in settlements and of roads connecting them; [and other gestures].... The United States, for its part, would pledge to limit its dialogue with Iran to a reasonable period of time, and not to include acceptance of Tehran's demand to recognize it as a hegemonic player in the Middle East.... Moreover, the United States would take part in the development of Israeli anti-missile and rocket programs without any connection to America's annual military assistance, and in a form and to an extent that would accelerate completion of -- and allow Israel to incorporate its own technology and weaponry in -- the new F-35 aircraft. The package of understandings would defuse the danger of an Israeli-American clash. On the one hand, it would ensure the economic and security infrastructure of the Palestinian state. On the other, tangible economic sanctions would undermine the regime of the ayatollahs.

II. "Our Man in Washington"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (5/4): QThe Washington ambassadorial job is arguably Israel's most important diplomatic posting. Naturally, it entails representing our government. But it also requires the ambassador to ensure that the prime minister understands which way the wind is blowing at the White House, Foggy Bottom, and on Capitol Hill. Moreover, the ambassador is the face of Israel to the American people. Hawk or a dove, or the epitome of an independent thinker, Oren must now put loyalty to Netanyahu above any personal or political consideration. Plainly, the Obama administration will not be spun or won over by Oren's rhetoric. With them, he will need to speak authoritatively

for a premier who, we trust, will have a clear agenda -- foremost on Iran and the Palestinians. An ambassador, no matter how eloquent or well-connected, cannot be compelling if the policies at the top are jumbled or lack resonance. Oren will be at his most effective if Netanyahu can articulate a foreign and security policy that is coherent and sensible.

CUNNINGHAM